



Fact Sheet:

Office of Problem Gambling (OPG)



Overview

As a result of Assembly Bill (AB) 673, Chapter 210, Statutes of 2003, the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP) was authorized to establish the Office of Problem Gambling (OPG) within ADP. With an annual operating budget of \$3 million derived from the Indian Gaming Special Distribution Fund, OPG will provide problem gambling prevention services for communities, families and individuals.

According to the national Association of Problem Gambling Service Administrators, 14 other states currently provide prevention and/or treatment services. California now joins the ranks of states having made a commitment to address problem and pathological gambling.

The Challenge

According to a 1998 report by the California Legislative Analyst's Office, consumer spending on gambling activities nationwide has outpaced the growth of personal income over the preceding 14 years. With the dramatic expansion of gambling opportunities, now including the Internet, there has been a comparable increase in gambling-related problems affecting individuals, families, employers, and communities. It is estimated that 2 to 5 percent of California's adult population is experiencing gambling problems, and

juveniles are twice as prone to experience gambling problems as adults are.

Definition of Terms

AB 673 defines "problem gambling" as participation in any form of gambling to the extent that it creates a negative consequence to the gambler, the gambler's family, place of employment, or community. This includes patterns of gambling and related behaviors that compromise, disrupt, or damage personal, familial, educational, financial, or vocational interests. "Pathological gambling disorder" is defined as a progressive mental disorder meeting the diagnostic criteria set forth in the *American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fourth Edition*.

Priorities of OPG

By direction of the State Legislature, the first priority of OPG will be to develop a statewide plan for addressing problem gambling and to develop a problem gambling prevention program. The prevention program shall consist of the following activities and services:

- A toll-free telephone helpline for immediate crises management and containment, with referrals to self-help groups and to health-care professionals who can provide treatment for gambling-related problems.

- Public awareness campaigns that focus on prevention and education among the general public, including dissemination of youth-oriented literature, educational experiences, and public service announcements in the media.
- Empirically-driven research programs focusing on epidemiology/prevalence, etiology/causation, and best practices in prevention and treatment.
- Training for health care professionals, educators, law enforcement personnel, and members of nonprofit organizations in identifying problem gambling behavior and in making referrals for assistance.
- Training for gambling-industry personnel in identifying customers who are at-risk for problem or pathological gambling and in making referrals for assistance.

In designing and developing the overall program, ADP will do all of the following:

- Develop a statewide plan to address problem and pathological gambling.
- Adopt any regulations necessary to administer the program.
- Develop priorities for funding services and criteria for distributing program funds.

- Monitor the expenditures of State funds by agencies and organizations receiving program funding.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of services provided through the program.

The enabling legislation recognizes that the need for problem and pathological gambling treatment services is an important priority. The legislation lays out a broad framework for developing programs to support treatment services. Implementation of these programs is subject to funding by the Legislature.

ADP anticipates operationalizing the prevention-related services called for in the statutes by late 2005. Interested parties should periodically refer to the OPG portion of the Department's website for information on funding opportunities.

If you think that you or someone you know may have a gambling problem, please access OPG's website at <http://www.adp.ca.gov/OPG/OPGhelpwebsites.shtml> or call one of the toll-free helplines listed below:

1-800-GAMBLER
1-800-322-8748
1-888-968-7888 (Mandarin and Cantonese languages only)

For the complete text of AB 673, please go to www.leginfo.ca.gov. Questions and comments may be directed to the OPG by email at OPG@adp.state.ca.us.